

# Dairy Pipeline

By  
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## Breeding Heifers Artificially Is Profitable

On many dairy farms, first calf heifers make up 30% or more of the milking herd. Because of this, they are a major source of replacements for the herd.

The younger, non-lactating heifers, if they are the offspring of good genetic matings, are the most superior animals on the farm - even if they are not yet producing milk.

Heifers are also the most fertile animals on the farm. They have the potential to give the highest conception rates on expensive semen from good bulls.

For these reasons, heifers should be bred to the same good -- or better -- A.I. proven bulls that you would consider using on your better cows.

Another argument for using good A.I. bulls over herd sires is that A.I. sires undergo some very intense mating, selecting and testing procedures. Because of this, their daughters produce an average of about 1175 pounds more milk per year than daughters from non-A.I. herd bulls.

By using good, A.I. proven bulls you are more sure of the genetics that will be transmitted to the offspring, and of the fertility of the bull. There is also less risk of spreading infection with A.I., and less risk of being injured by a bull.

Because of the risk of spreading

infection it is not advisable to use a cleanup bull to settle non-breeders. The reason some cows don't breed may be due to infection, and the bull could spread that infection to other cows, which could make a bad breeding problem even worse.

What kind of bull should you use on your heifers? Personal preferences will play a large part in many cases. In some cases you may want to select bulls that help build strong pedigrees. In other cases you may prefer high PTA (formerly high PD) bulls that also have a history of siring smaller calves or have the potential to correct certain type traits. A portion of the herd could -- and should -- be bred to unproven young sires that are being sampled by A.I. units.

Because of all the special matings and intense screening undergone by most young sires, they almost certainly will become some of our best bulls of tomorrow -- even though they are not yet proven nor inactive service. Sampling these young sires now, gives you a headstart on the better genetics of tomorrow. Remember too, chances are, the poorest of these young sires is probably as good as the average A.I. bull in active service today.

Earlier, I compared the superiority of A.I. proven bulls (all

ages) to non-A.I. herd bulls. The same advantage exists with young sample sires, as shown by 1988 USDA-DHIA genetic evaluations. The PDS of first evaluation A.I. bulls was \$50 compared to a negative \$5 for non-A.I. bulls. That's a \$55 advantage for using young sample sires. The difference would be even greater if high PD proven bulls were used.

It goes without saying that if heifers are bred to good A.I. proven bulls, or to some young sample sires, they need to be well managed in order for their inherited genetics to have the opportunity to express itself and for you to have the opportunity to cash in on what the good genetics have to offer. That means heifers need to be healthy, well fed -- not fat -- and properly housed.

Recently, I had the opportunity to observe some severely damaged lung tissue of a young poor doing goat that probably had a bout with respiratory problems earlier in its life. Its lungs were scarred beyond repair and the poor critter would have suffered from his lung damage the rest of its life. The same can happen to a calf, and in spite of the good genetics it inherited -- and the good semen you bought -- it will never be able to reach its true genetic potential.

A similar thing can happen to the udders of heifers if you get them too fat between puberty and breeding age -- between 7-15 months of age. Excess energy at this stage of life encourages the calf to lay down fatty tissue in the udder and prevents the development of secretory tissue. This can cut first lactation production by 1500 pounds or more, and some people believe production is reduced in future lactations as well.

The point is, breed your heifers well and then manage them well so as not to put a lid on their potential performance.

The next challenge is to catch the heifers in heat, to restrain them without too much excitement so you can examine them, inseminate them and treat them. Hopefully, they will have conceived, and will deliver a healthy calf.

If heat detection is a problem, consider heat synchronization as a

method for concentrating your efforts -- and excitement -- into a smaller block of time, for better detection and more precise timing of insemination. Needless to say, good restraint facilities will make your job much easier; they will also keep heifers quieter, thereby improving the opportunity for

conception.

Well-bred heifers are your best animals on the farm -- your here of tomorrow. Treat them as such for your sake, and for theirs.

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## Meeting To Discuss Current Feed Situation

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Feed quality and quantity has been drastically affected by the unusual growing conditions of 1989, crop diseases, weed infestation, weather damage and maturity. Farmers are already feeling the impact of this and are finding it more difficult to sustain milk flow.

Many farmers are going into the winter with little to no hay in storage and the hay that is available is high priced and lower in quality.

These conditions will dictate the need for some major adjustments in dairy rations.

A meeting has been set for November 2, 1989, 7 p.m. at the New Holland Auction Center (the new facility behind the fence and across Jackson Street from the New Holland Sales Stables) to discuss the impact conditions will have on the way dairy farmers feed.

Dairymen and all those who assist dairymen in balancing feed

rations are invited to attend the meeting. Speaking on the current feed situation will be Dr. Richard Adams of Penn State, and Glenn Shirk, Dairy Extension Agent. Discussion will be open to all who attend.

## "Insights" Discontinued

The "Insights" newsletter put out by the American Sheep Industry Association has been discontinued. A new weekly market newsletter will be available to sheep producers for \$25 per year. Four sample newsletters will be sent for review. Producers will receive industry and association news through the monthly "National Wool Grower" magazine, which is free to members of federated state sheep organizations.

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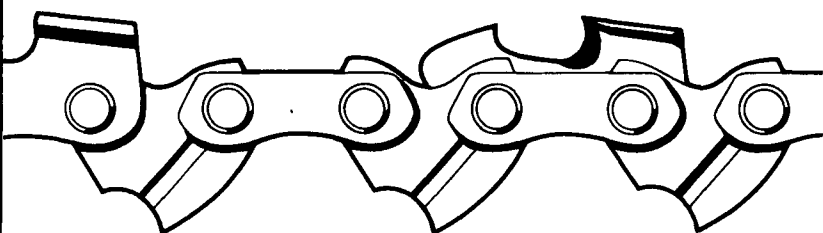
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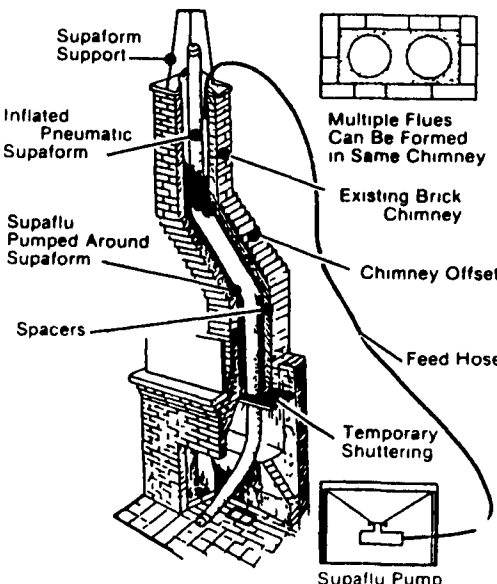


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